The Church and Faith of Armenia

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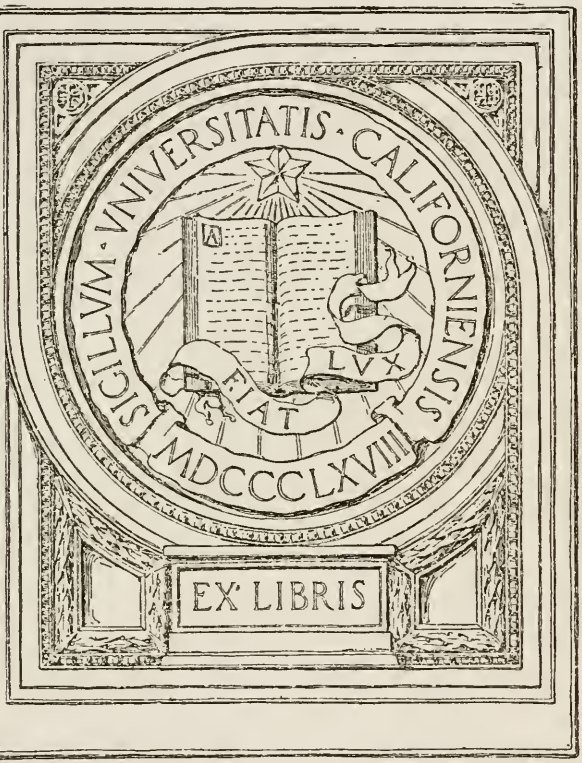

THE CHURCH AND FAITH OF ARMENIA

The Very Rev. Dr. Abel Abrahamian,
The Armenian Vardapet who exercises episcopal jurisdiction in England.

Frontispiece.

THE CHURCH AND FAITH OF ARMENIA

By

THE RT. REV. DR. ABEL ABRAHAMIAN

Supreme Vardapet of Armenians in England; Author of *Die Grundlagen des Armenischen Kirchenrechts* (Zürich F, 1917)

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To the undying memory of all my Brethren of the Armenian Clergy, who fell at the hands of the barbarous TURK, in deep reverence for their devotion and self-denial.

A. A.

VARTANANTZ 1920
London.

PREFACE

IT is a pleasure to me to accede to the request that I should write a few lines of Preface to this little book on the Religions of Armenia. Our thoughts have been of late constantly turned to the Church of that longsuffering country, and our sympathies go forth in full measure to its brave people, who for so many centuries have remained steadfast to their faith in spite of ruthless persecutions and massacres, which, alas! have extended right down to the present time. We can only hope and pray that brighter days may be in store for them, and that they may at last obtain their freedom and the right to live, which has been so cruelly denied to them in the past. There are already various books accessible which give to English readers some accounts of the Armenians and their Church, of which perhaps the most convenient is Archdeacon Dowling's little volume, "The Armenian Church" (S.P.C.K., 1910); but the little work which I am now asked to introduce has this advantage: not only that it is brought up to date, but even more, that it enables English readers to see exactly what the Armenians say of themselves; for it is actually written by an Armenian Vardapet, and is therefore not simply the work of a sympathizer, who, after all, writes from outside, but of one who writes from within, and is able to speak from first-hand knowledge of the

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things that he has grown up amidst. This gives his work a special value and character of its own, and it is from this point of view that I venture to commend it, and to express the hope that it may do something to familiarize English readers with the history and character of what the writer proudly claims as "the first Christian Church," an expression which he explains by saying that "Armenia was the first country to establish Christianity as a State Religion."

EDGAR C. S. GLOUCESTER.

The Palace,
Gloucester.
Feb. 26, 1920.

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THE CHURCH AND FAITH OF ARMENIA

CHAPTER I

ARMENIA: GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL SURVEY

THE easiest way to form an idea of the geographical situation of Armenia is to picture to oneself Mount Ararat, around which extends the country of Armenia stretching northwards up to the river Kur, which flows from the southern slopes of the Caucasian chain of mountains, southwards up to the Taurus mountain range and the middle course of the river Tigris, eastwards up to the plain of Moughan, which extends as far as the Caspian Sea, and westwards up to the western Euphrates.

In the times when Armenia was independent, there were periods when the population of this area amounted to thirty millions, whereas at the

beginning of the World War the inhabitants of the historical regions of Armenia numbered scarcely four millions. The whole of this area, which was called Greater Armenia, maintained its independence until the middle of the eleventh century. During that century (1045) Greater Armenia lost its independence, and a new dynasty—the Rubenian—began to reign in Lesser Armenia (the present Cilicia). Under this dynasty Lesser Armenia continued independent till the fourteenth century (1375), when it was invaded by the Mamelukes, and Leo VI, the last King, was taken as a prisoner to Egypt. After a few years' captivity, he regained his liberty and came to Europe with a view to recovering his lost crown with the aid of European princes, but these hopes were disappointed.

For more than five centuries attempts have been made to restore the lost independence of Armenia, but, up to the present day, without any decisive success.

The origin of the Armenian people may be regarded from two points of view: (1) From the view of legendary and traditional history, and (2) from the scientific point of view by use of the latest researches. Let us not forget that the early history of every nation is based on legend and tradition. According to tradition, the progenitor of the Armenian race was a hero called Haik, who, by killing Bel, safeguarded the independence

of his tribe. After his death, Haik was transported to Heaven and became the Constellation of Orion, which is called "Haik" in Armenian. With the ancestral Haik begins the patriarchal dynasty which, according to Moses of Khorene, the Herodotus of Armenia, consisted of thirty-six patriarchs and seventeen kings. This dynasty was succeeded by the historical dynasty of the Arshakides, which reigned till the fifth century A.D.

Then began the dynasty of the Bagratides, which lasted till the eleventh century, after which the Armenians, having lost their independence in Greater Armenia, set up a kingdom in Cilicia (Lesser Armenia) in 1080 under the Rubenian dynasty.

After the fall of the Rubenian dynasty (1375), Armenia became a bone of contention among the neighbouring nations until the seventeenth century (1620), when it was divided between Turkey and Persia. After this, Russia's desire for expansion, on the one hand towards the Persian Gulf, on the other hand towards the Mediterranean, resulted, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in Russo-Persian and Russo-Turkish wars, whereby Russia became the ruler of a large portion of Armenia. Thus Armenia became divided among Turkey, Russia and Persia in the proportion indicated by the order of these names.

Such was the position of Armenia at the outbreak

of the Great War. The Armenians sided with the Allies and fought against Turkey, being assured by the Governments of the Allied Powers that, after the war, Armenia should be made independent.

Unfortunately there is very little material for the collection of authentic data as to the earliest history of the Armenians; it is only known that Armenia, before it was peopled by ancestors of the present Armenians, was inhabited by the Khalds, who waged frequent wars with their southern neighbours, the Assyrians. The first mention of Armenians occurs in the cuneiform inscriptions of the ninth century B.C., where the Armenians are mentioned as invaders of the country inhabited by the Khalds (the region of Lake Van). The Armenians, apparently, absorbed the Khalds and became the ruling race.

The cuneiform inscriptions of Darius (521–485 B.C.) establish the fact that Armenia as early as 520 B.C. was an independent State: so much so that Darius was obliged to send his best warriors and picked soldiers to withstand its attack. In later centuries the Armenians gained such increasing success that, in the days of Tigranes the Great (94–55 B.C.) the boundaries of Armenia extended to the Black, the Mediterranean and the Caspian Seas. The reign of Tigranes the Great is the most glorious political epoch in Armenian history. For forty years this monarch was able to resist the gigantic

His Beatitude Kevork V., (George V). Supreme Patriarch of the Armenians. (Catholicos of Etchmiadsin.)

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Roman Empire, fighting against Lucullus and Pompey.

It is the unanimous opinion of Western anthropologists that the Armenians, judging by the shape of their skull and by their language, belong to the Western branch of the Indo-European family, which also includes the chief European peoples—the Latin, Anglo-Saxon, and other races. In this lies the great misfortune of the Armenians: that they, being Indo-European, have inhabited a country surrounded by non-Indo-European races. In such an environment, the Armenians, having been cut off from the other members of the family to which they belong, were obliged for centuries to wage war against their alien neighbours, who unfortunately always had a numerical preponderance. Any impartial historian who studies Armenian history will be surprised that any Armenians were able to survive such an unequal war, lasting for centuries, whereas many of their neighbours have disappeared, leaving no trace. To the racial difference between the Armenian and the surrounding nations is to add the religious difference which invigorates still further their struggle in self-defence. The Armenian age-long fight for independence was racial before it became political. We shall soon see the part played by Christianity—or, rather, by the Armenian Church—in this struggle.

We may assume that the very fact that the

Armenians have for centuries waged war in an alien atmosphere, resolved not to lose their individuality, is a convincing proof of their racial superiority to their neighbours.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

IT is astonishing to find that there are a great number of people in England who are surprised to learn that the Armenians are Christians. The surprise of such people will be increased if they are informed that the Armenian Church was the first Christian Church, in the sense that it was in Armenia that Christianity was first made the State-religion. We shall return to this matter by and by.

The material for the treatment of our present subject is derived, on the one hand, from the tradition of the Armenian Church, and, on the other hand, from Armenian and foreign chroniclers. It is well known that the Armenian Church considers itself to be of Apostolic origin, because Christianity was first preached in Armenia by the Apostles. According to Armenian tradition, Armenia was visited by St. Thaddæus and St. Bartholomew consecutively, both of whom preached in Armenia and suffered martyrdom there. To this day the

PLAN OF AN ARMENIAN CHURCH

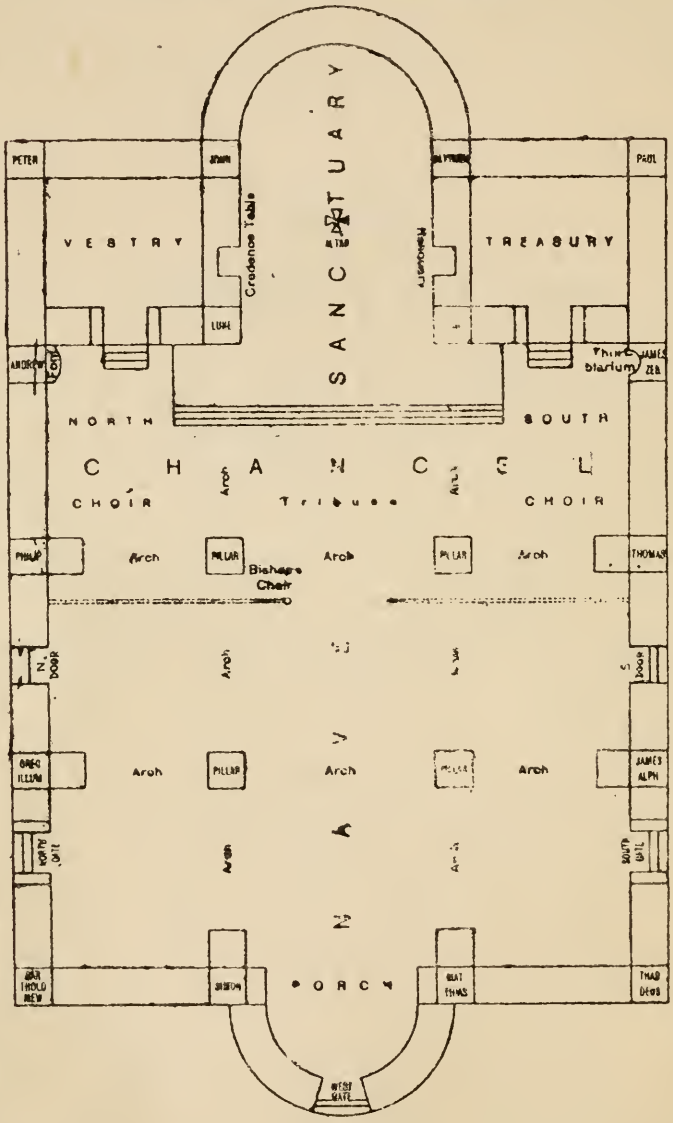

Photo. S L O Calcutta.

Church dedicated to St. Thaddæus, erected on the scene of his martyrdom, is to be seen on the south-east of Mount Ararat in the district of old Ardaze. Those who are acquainted with the contemporary Armenian and Greek chronicles know that the traditional history of Armenia is confirmed by historical records, cited by Moses of Khorene, Faustus of Byzantium, Eusebius of Cæsarea (in his *Ecclesiastical History*) and others. Those who are acquainted with general Church history must know that Thaddæus the Apostle, who preached in Armenia, was the twin brother of St. Thomas Didymus. Thus the Armenian Church has the right to call itself *Apostolic*, a name which has two significations: it denotes (*a*) that the Armenians' conversion to Christianity was due to Apostles, without the interposition of any Church; (*b*) that the Armenian Church must rank in the Christian world with all other Churches that are called "Apostolic."

St. Thaddæus suffered martyrdom at Ardaze in A.D. 50, and St. Bartholomew at Albacus in A.D. 68. The Armenians call these two saints "the First Illuminators." After their martyrdom, their work did not cease, but was continued by the bishops consecrated by them. These bishops went over the whole country preaching the Gospel. But it was not till two and a half centuries later that Armenia entirely shook off heathendom and Christianity became the State religion. This

great change was effected by the preaching of St. Gregory the Parthian, surnamed "Lusavoritch," i.e., "the Illuminator," because he brought to the Armenian nation the light of the Gospel.

St. Gregory was of Parthian descent, and was brought up in the Hellenic culture. He received his ecclesiastical training at Cæsarea. He came to Armenia at the end of the third century, during the reign of Tiridates the Great, in order to continue the work initiated by SS. Thaddæus and Bartholomew. After many years of persecution, during which he suffered great tortures, he succeeded, by the working of a miracle, in converting King Tiridates, his family, his court and the most important nobles (A.D. 301). By a royal decree, Christianity was adopted as the State religion and St. Gregory was proclaimed the head of the Armenian Church. As such, it was deemed necessary that he should go to Cæsarea to be consecrated as Catholicos by the Patriarch Leonitius. Most probably St. Gregory himself wished to go to Cæsarea as he had received his ecclesiastical training there. We shall soon see what interpretation was put on this consecration by the Greek and Catholic Churches.

As the head of the Church, St. Gregory at once began the work of ecclesiastical organisation. He established new bishoprics, to which he appointed fresh bishops, with clergy under them. He also founded and endowed monasteries and

schools. He reformed the Church Rites and established a system of ecclesiastical laws and regulations. Many of the monastries founded by St. Gregory are still standing. Of these the most famous is the monastry of St. Etchmiadzin, built in 303, in the capital town of Vagharshapat, which, from the time of St. Gregory up to the present time, with a few interruptions, has been the seat of the Catholicos.

The most striking characteristic of St. Gregory was his sure grasp of the psychology of the people, as was shown in his plan of action. Being well aware how deeply rooted paganism was in the popular mind, he perceived that the best way of promoting the interests of Christianity was, not to establish it side by side with heathendom, but to plant it on the ruins of the old faith, in such a way that the populace passed imperceptibly from the one religion to the other. To this end he transformed many pagan temples into Christian Churches (e.g. the temple of Anahit in Yeriza became the monastery of St. Karapet, St. John) and persuaded many heathen priests to enter the Christian hierarchy (e.g. the family of Albianos).

Many who are familiar with Armenian history must have observed that no event has been so significant or has left so deep an impression on Armenian life as the work of St. Gregory. Nevertheless it would be erroneous to suppose that the influence of Christianity did not begin to make

itself felt before his time. Even if we disregard all the historical facts and the names of pre-Gregorian martyrs, who, up to this day, are revered and commemorated by the Armenian Church, we must admit the existence of Christianity in Armenia before the advent of St. Gregory, because, otherwise, the colossal success achieved by this saint in the conversion of the king and people would be inexplicable and illogical. Special attention must be paid to this point, in order to establish the fact that the Armenian Church is Apostolic, i.e., one of the Christian communities founded by the Apostles.

For the Armenian Church these communities have the same significance as the first Christian community founded at Rome by St. Peter has for the Catholic Church.

There are some unfounded doubts concerning the date, accepted by the Armenian Church tradition, of the adoption of Christianity as the State religion. Even if we admit, for the moment, that there is some ground for this scepticism, nevertheless the irrefutable fact remains that Eusebius of Cæsarea, in his *Ecclesiastical History* records that, in 311, Maximian the Dacian declared war against Armenia on account of the latter's "new religion." The "new religion" was nothing but the adoption of Christianity as the State religion, and this statement confirms the tradition of the Armenian Church. Thus we

The Cathedral of Etchmiadsin, "the Home of all Armenians."

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see that actually Armenia was the first country to establish Christianity as a State religion; even Rome did not take this step till later. Constantine the Great, by the edict of Milan, proclaimed toleration of Christianity in 313, but he himself only embraced Christianity on his deathbed in 337.

Before proceeding to the post-Gregorian development of the Armenian Church, we beg leave to clear up the point of the interpretation which the Greek and Catholic Churches give of St. Gregory's consecration by the Patriarch of Cæsarea. The Greek Church uses this fact as evidence of the subordination of the Armenian See to the See of Cæsarea. Consequently, there arose an antagonism between these two Sees which lasted till the fifth century. The Greek Church calls the Armenian Church *schismatic*. The Catholic Church, in its turn, considers the Armenian See as a *suffragan* to the See of Cæsarea, and insists that it is due to a Bull issued by the Pope Sylvester I that the Armenian See is established as an autocephalic See. With due respect to both these Churches, we cannot but declare that both these views are erroneous and contrary to historical facts. If the consecration of St. Gregory at Cæsarea meant subordination, the See of Cæsarea would, in one way or another, have manifested its seniority to the Armenian See, whereas there is no mention whatever made in history of any such manifesta-

tion. On the contrary, it is a well-known fact that the Armenian Church, from the very first day of its existence, has acted quite independently, without any interference from without. The view of the Greek Church is not based on historical facts, but on an erroneous supposition arising in later times. As to the Catholic view, it is also wrong, because it is well known to-day that the Bull attributed to Pope Sylvester I is only an apocryphal document, concocted by Armenians during the Crusades for political ends, i.e., to gain the Pope's intervention so as to keep the Kingdom of Cilicia in Armenian hands.

These controversial questions were rife in the past and have caused much vexation on both sides, but to-day they can only have an historical importance, because Churches have more essential matters to consider than the discussion of questions of priority. Would it not be better if the Christian Churches would respect one another's independence and unite in consolidating their efforts in a combined fight against the great evil which is gradually spreading in all directions, threatening all the Churches equally—the danger of Atheism ?

This is what is demanded of us, by the Church, and its only Head, Jesus Christ.

Let us now return to our subject. St. Gregory, after administering the Armenian Church for a quarter of a century, died in 325, just a little after the Council of Nicæa. He was succeeded by his

younger son, Aristakes (325–333), who died unmarried. Aristakes took part in the Council and brought back with him the Credo it had accepted. St. Gregory was still alive and made the following addition to the Creed :

"But we will glorify Him Who was before time, by worshipping the Holy Trinity and one Godhead, of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, now and always, unto all eternity. Amen."

Aristakes was succeeded by his elder brother, Vertanes (333–341), who was married. Vertanes was succeeded by his son, Husik (341–347) ; then, after some breaks, the See of St. Gregory reverted to his descendants, all of whom were exemplary prelates and endeavoured to expand the work of their illustrious ancestor. The fact that the succession of the Catholicate passed into the hands of St. Gregory's descendants is erroneously regarded by some European scholars as an indication that the Catholicate was hereditary. The mere fact of the succession is not sufficient to establish such a conclusion. That several of the descendants of St. Gregory successively held the Catholicate is an historical fact, but that that succession descended by hereditary right cannot be proved by historical evidence or by the constitution of the Armenian Church. If the Catholicate had descended by hereditary succession, one would naturally expect an elder son to precede a younger, but the reverse is the case, as we have seen. It may

be argued that the elder son may have had some defect which disqualified him for the succession, but this assumption is also erroneous, for we know that the elder son of St. Gregory succeeded to the See on the death of the younger son. Our view is confirmed by the Armenian Chronicler, Faustus of Byzantium, who, speaking of the election of St. Gregory's grandson Husik, says: "Les chefs de plusieurs grandes familles et de differentes races, les grands qui avaient leurs propres soldats et leurs bannières, tants les satrapes et les nobles, les chefs et les princes, les généraux et les gardiens des frontières, se réunirent chez le roi Arshak pour délibérer sur le *choix* d'un chef spirituel qui fût digne d'occuper le siège patriarchal et de garder les brebis du Christ. . . ." (Liv. iv. ch. iii., p. 236 C). In consequence there can be no question of the See of the Catholicos having been hereditary.

The want of an Armenian alphabet now became acutely felt because, in the Armenian Churches, the priest was obliged to read the Scriptures in Greek or Syriac and very few of the people understood what was read. It may be worth while to mention that, in the Armenian Church of this period, there was an order of "Readers," whose business it was to read (*Verdsanogh*) and interpret (*Targmanitch*) the Bible. In order to overcome the difficulty of making the Holy Scriptures intelligible to the people and to strengthen the cause of Christianity, it was deemed necessary to translate

the Bible into Armenian; for which work it was necessary to have a specific alphabet to represent the Armenian sounds.

This want was supplied in 412 by St. Mesrop, who, after long labours, succeeded in forming an alphabet of thirty-six letters which completely represents all the sounds in the Armenian language.

With the formation of this alphabet a new era began for the Armenian Church and for the Armenian Nation generally. The first work that was undertaken after the formation of the alphabet was the translation of the Bible. Mesrop himself was the leader in this great work. He and Sahak, the Catholicos of that time, with the collaboration of a group of learned linguists and interpreters, produced, after careful and minute study of the text, a translation from the Greek Septuagint, which they compared with the Syriac version. The Armenian translation of the Bible is considered by Western theologians "the Queen of translations," on account of its exactitude and its beauty.

After the Bible, a series of books was compiled dealing with ecclesiastical rites, the Liturgy of the Mass among the rest. This liturgy was based on the text of St. Basil. A number of translations of the works of the Fathers of the Greek Church, as well as the contemporaneous Greek classics, hold a prominent place in the Armenian literature of this period. It is interesting to note that some

of the originals of these works are lost, and now only exist in the Armenian translation. A number of historical works of this period have also come down to us which were all, without exception, written by Armenian ecclesiastics.

As we see, Armenian literature was born of the need of the Church, and was the work of Armenian Churchmen. And it was very soon proved that, in fact, a literature begun in this way greatly helped in the spread and establishment of Christianity. This proof was given in 451 by the battle of Vardan, when the Armenian Nation came forth as one man against Persia, whose king, Haskert II, instigated by the Zoroastrian priesthood around him, set out to exterminate Armenian Christianity. Although the Armenians, being the fewer in number, and deserted by some of the Christian nations on whom they had counted for help, were defeated, Persia saw that it was impossible to destroy Christianity in Armenia. It was in the year of this war that the Œcumenical Council of Chalcedon took place, in which the Armenians did not take part. Probably they were occupied with the war and did not even know of the meeting of that Council, or of the religious disputes that arose out of it, which caused so much dissension in Constantinople, Rome, and Ephesus. It was not until forty years later that the Armenians had an opportunity of making their position clear, when the Nestorians established in Persia attempted to

attack the Armenian Church. At that time, in 506, a Council was called at Dvin under the Presidency of Catholicos Babken, which, after examining the causes of dissent at Chalcedon, decided to reject the decisions of this Council and to recognise only the first three Œcumenical Councils. It appears that the Council of Dvin was not unaware of the jealousies and ambitions of the Græco-Roman Patriarchs which played such a prominent part at the Council of Chalcedon. At the same time it appears that the conception formed by the Armenian Church concerning an Œcumenical Council played no less a rôle in causing it to reject decisions of the Council of Chalcedon. According to that conception, the Œcumenical Council representing the whole of the Christian world—that is, all the Christian Churches, must fulfil one fundamental condition—that is, all the members must be inspired by the Holy Ghost. Taking into consideration all the disputes that arose, all the divergent opinions that were expressed, at the Council of Chalcedon, the Armenian Church concluded that the members of that Council were not inspired by the Holy Ghost; so they decided to keep unaltered the faith and the canon which had been accepted by the first three Œcumenical Councils. Remaining faithful to this principle, the Armenian Church has left unchanged the Confession which it accepted at the beginning, which at the same time is the Confession of the

Universal Church as it was before the Council of Chalcedon.

It might have been expected that civilised Christendom would appreciate this "antiquity" of the Armenian Church and foster it as such, but this has not been the case.

Although the Armenian Church is conservative in these dogmatic questions, and has not been subjected to any alterations till now, it has undergone a great historical evolution in its administrative organisation.

To understand this evolution it is indispensable to explain the characteristic bond which unites the Armenian Nation with its Church. This union is owing, on the one hand, to internal and external political conditions, and, on the other hand, to the valuable services rendered by the Armenian Church during the time of the independence of Armenia and afterwards.

We must consider two periods in the political life for Armenia, for of course the political conditions of Armenia were one thing during her independence and another afterwards.

If we consider the history of Armenia we shall see that in both periods the Armenian Church was called to take a special part in Armenian political life. The constitution of the Armenian Kingdom was feudal under all the dynasties. Different provinces were subject to different princes (Nakharar), who had a semi-independent position in

Armenian Bishop in full vestments (note Western mitre and staff, but Eastern chasuble, etc.)

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relation to the reigning kings. As the Armenian princes enjoyed complete internal freedom, they were bound to pay certain tributes and render military assistance in time of war.

It is easy to imagine the rôle of the Armenian Church under such circumstances, as a united national organisation. It has often happened that the Armenian Catholicos found it necessary to intervene in disputes between princes or between a prince and the king, acting the part of a " Justice of the Peace." In the same way it has often happened that the kings or princes have felt the need of the intervention of the Armenian Church to smooth away their difficulties with the people.

If we add to this the benevolent, educational, literary and scientific labour of the Armenian Church we shall readily understand the close ties which united this Church with the Armenian Nation from the earliest period of Armenian independence. These ties were still further strengthened after the fall of the Armenian Kingdom, when the country was subjugated under an alien yoke : in 1045 in Greater Armenia, and in 1375 in Lesser Armenia (Cilicia).

After that period, Armenia was invaded, successively, by Arabs, Mongols, Seljuks, Persians, Turks, and Russians. Although the invaders of Armenia frequently massacred the people, they, nevertheless, more or less tolerated the Armenian Church and ecclesiastical institutions. Under these con-

ditions the Armenians, though deprived of their independence, organised themselves in the Church, with the object of maintaining their national unity and preserving the fruits of their—already advanced—civilisation. There is no doubt that this attachment between the Church and the nation produced good results, for the rulers of Armenia sometimes invested the Armenian Church with functions that they would not have entrusted to a purely lay organisation. Thus, Civil government, public education, the management of national property and the various departments of Civil Law were directed by the ecclesiastical power during the various periods of foreign rule. By the exercise of these functions the Armenian Church became the sole representative of the national life in all its branches. This obliged it to occupy itself with political as well as religious questions.

The Armenian Church, bound by such ties to the Armenian Nation, adapting its juridical and administrative organisation and activities to the requirements of the people and the times, has become to-day a completely national and democratic Church.

CHAPTER III

THE ORGANISATION AND RULE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

IT would serve a better purpose to dwell in this chapter on the fundamental principles on which the organisation of the Armenian Church is based and by which it is ruled, than to enter into the details of its organisation and rule, which are of secondary consideration. First of all it should be accentuated that the organisation and the rule of the Armenian Church of the present day have emanated, not from the activities of an ecclesiastical legislative body, but from the history of the Armenian Nation. From that history have originated and established themselves the fundamental principles, thanks to which the Armenian Church has become to-day a *National and Democratic* organisation. The Armenian Church is National because it embraces in itself the whole nation.[1]

It is democratic because its supreme power belongs to the Armenian Nation, to the lay and

[1] In order to show what an insignificant percentage of the Armenian Nation are the Armenians who belong to other denominations, we quote the following census

the ecclesiastical elements taken together. It is interesting to note that the Armenian Nation is the custodian of not only the purely adminstrative prerogatives of the Church, but it also has a voice in doctrinal (non-dogmatic) questions as well. To our mind it will not be erroneous to state that in this respect the Armenian Church stands alone and radically differs from the ancient Eastern Churches. To employ the terminology of the Catholic Church, the potestas ecclesiastica belongs not to the Armenian clergy, but to the Armenian Nation. The organ of the Armenian Nation, which is the bearer of the potestas ecclesiastica of the Armenian Church, from the very beginning has been the Ecclesiastical Supreme Council, which met for the first time in A.D. 365 in the town of Ashtishat under the Presidency of the Catholicos Nerses, and at which both laymen and clergy

from the "Church of Armenia," the work of the late Patriarch of Constantinople, Archbishop Ormanian.

Under the Patriarchate	*Armenian.*	*Catholic.*	*Protestant.*
of Constantinople	1,390,000	67,000	24,000
of Jerusalem	7,000	500	
of Etchmiadzin *Supreme Patriarchate* (Catholicos of all the Armenians)	1,696,000	52,400	6,500
of Catholicos of Cilicia	284,000	17,000	16,000
Catholicate of Akhtamar	95,000		500
	3,472,000	136,900	47,000
	95%	3·7%	1·3%

Total 3,655,900

were present. In later centuries similar conventions have met to discuss various questions, but the space will not permit us to speak about them. It would be appropriate to say a few words about the composition and the manner of election to this Ecclesiastical Supreme Council. Through historical development the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council meets nowadays by the invitation of the Catholicos of all Armenia. The people in every diocese elect one lay and one clerical delegate, and all the delegates meet under the Presidency of the Catholicos and discuss questions and pass resolutions by the majority of votes which are binding on all. The Catholicos himself, although head of the hierarchy of the Armenian Church, submits to the decrees of such councils and is responsible to them for his actions.

Thanks to this council system, the elective principle has taken root in the Armenian Church, and therefore every ecclesiastical functionary, from the highest to the lowest, is elected by the people. The elective system, in its turn, has created an order of things by which the Armenian clergy have become a mere executive body, legislative functions being discharged exclusively by the General Council.

Another characteristic aspect of the composition and administration of the Armenian Church may be noticed, viz., the perfect harmony which it has succeeded in establishing between centralisation

and de-centralisation. It is owing to this harmony that the Armenian Church has been successful up to the present day in preserving its national administrative unity, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, its unshaken loyalty to democratic principles.

By keeping in view these two principles, the reader will be enabled to understand the administrative composition, the division, the hierarchy, and the government of the Armenian Church, as they existed before the war and as they exist now. Since the Armenian Church is a National Church and since the Armenian land and nation are divided among three countries, the Armenian Church has an establishment under three Governments, by all of which it is not merely regarded as an ecclesiastical organisation, but it is also recognised as having the status of a National representative body. The threefold division, which arises out of political conditions, in no way impairs the unity of its administration. We shall return to this later.

The three countries referred to above are Turkey, Russia, and Persia. In these three countries the Armenian Church, administratively, is divided into dioceses. In Turkey there are sixty-five dioceses, in Russia six, in Persia two, wherein are included the East Indies and the island of Tava. In addition to this, the Armenians in Europe and in America each form a diocese. Thus the total number of dioceses is seventy-six. The organisa-

tion and the government of the Armenian Church in Turkey are controlled by the so-called "National Constitution," which was decreed by the Turkish Government, and accepted by the Armenian Nation in 1863. In Russia the Church is governed by the "Pologenia" which was enacted in 1836. According to these laws, every diocese is autonomous, subject to local jurisdiction, and preserving the uniformity of the fundamental laws of the Church, forming an administrative unity, headed by a prelate. In Turkey, to the prelacies are attached the "Provincial civil and ecclesiastical Councils," which are elected by the laity. The decisions of the councils are put in execution by the prelates, who also preside over the council meetings. In Russia, for the government of the diocese, a Consistorium is attached to the prelacy. The members of this Consistorium are clergy and are appointed by the prelate.

Forty-five of the dioceses in Turkey are subject directly to the Armenian Patriarch at Constantinople; thirteen to the Catholicos of Sis, two to the Catholicos of Akhtamar, five to the Patriarch of Jerusalem. The Patriarch of Constantinople, as eccelsiastical and temporal representative and head of all the Turkish Armenians, exercises authority also over the Catholicates of Sis and Akhtamar and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, but he, in his turn, is subordinate to the Catholicos of all the Armenians at Etchmiadzin, who is the head of the

whole Armenian Church. The Russian, Persian, European and American dioceses are also directly subject to the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin. Such is the Administrative Hierarchy of the Armenian Church, which is quite distinct from its ecclesiastical Hierarchy.

The ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Armenian Church consists of the following orders :—

Consecrated	9. Catholicos. 8. Bishop. (Archbishop). 7. Priest. (Vardapet, Khahana).
Ordained by	6. Deacon. (Sarkavag.) 5. Sub-Deacon. (Kisasarkavag.)
Laying on of hands	4. Acolyte. (Djahenkal.) 3. Exorcist. (Erdemetzutzitch.) 2. Reader or Psalmist. (Saghmosasatz.) 1. Door Keeper. (Dernapan.)

To use the terminology of the Catholic Church, the first three (consecrated) orders formed the sacerdocium, the last six the ministerium of the Armenian Church. It is most noteworthy that the Armenian Church has a married and unmarried clergy. Every one who is desirous of taking orders and has qualified himself for doing so, when admitted to Deacon's Orders, must declare what category he wishes to enter, that of the married, or that of the unmarried clergy. If the candidate wishes to enter the category of the married clergy, he becomes a priest, receiving the seventh order, and is ineligible for the higher ecclesiastical offices but, if he enters the category of the celibate clergy

Armenian Cathedral of Ani, built 865, sacked by the Seljuks in 1045, since when it has been partially a ruin.

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he becomes an *archimandrite* (Vardapet) and is eligible for the highest orders. In regard to functions, the administrative authoritative offices are in the hands of the celibate clergy; the married clergy have "the cure of souls" only. Thus the Catholicate, the Patriarchate and the prelacy are all functions open to the celibate clergy.

The Catholicos of all the Armenians at Etchmiadzin, as head of the entire Armenian Church, is regarded as the successor of the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew. As such the Catholicos, besides his administrative powers, is the only potentate who has authority to ordain bishops. Another of his purely ecclesiastical functions is to consecrate the holy chrism, a ceremony which is performed with great solemnity. These two ecclesiastical functions are exercised at Etchmiadzin, which is the seat of the Catholicos.

The election of the Catholicos is made by delegates, two from each diocese, one of whom is the prelate, the other a layman elected by the people. All these delegates, both lay and clerical, assemble in Etchmiadzin and elect the Catholicos of all the Armenians. In this election all the bishops who have been consecrated at Etchmiadzin are eligible; but those consecrated by the Catholicos of Sis are ineligible and their administrative rights do not extend beyond the dioceses under the jurisdiction of that Catholicos.

The second order after that of Catholicos is the

bishop. The chief administrative function of a bishop is the prelacy of the diocese; his clerical function being the consecration of the clergy. The prelacy of a diocese can also be held by an archimandrite, whose functions are the same as those of a bishop-prelate minus the latter's clerical functions. For instance, an archimandrite has no authority to consecrate any clergyman in his diocese. A prelate of a diocese—whether an archimandrite or a bishop—has to be elected by the people of the diocese. It is noteworthy that in Russia, in all elections, the suffrage is extended to women as well as men.

The priest having no administrative function, his duties consist in the care of the souls in his parish and congregation. A priest is elected by the parish congregation and receives his consecration from the bishop of the diocese, but if the prelate is not a bishop, then he is consecrated by a bishop of some other diocese.

In order to form a more vivid picture of the status of the Armenian clergy in the organisation of the Church let it be permitted us to compare it with the order existing in the Catholic Church. It is well known that in the Catholic Church the potestas ecclesiastica belongs to the clerus, in accordance with which the Catholic hierarchy has two gradations: the hierarchia ordinis and the hierarchia jurisdictionis: the first named is invested with the potestas ordinis, and the second

one with the potestas jurisdictionis, and for the exercise of these two powers no fresh conditions are required. This is not the case with the Armenian Church. In the Armenian Church the hierarchia ordinis and the hierarchia jurisdictionis are not the actual executers of the potestas ordinis and the potestas jurisdictionis, but the potential bearers of those powers. For the exercise of these powers election by the people is a preliminary condition. For instance, a bishop who, as a member of the hierarchia ordinis, is at the same time the bearer of the potestas ordinis, cannot consecrate, as a priest whomever he likes and whenever he likes. He can only consecrate the candidates chosen by the people after an election has been duly held. Also, an Armenian bishop, who, as a bearer of the potestas jurisdictionis, cannot become prelate of a diocese or exercise any administrative functions unless he is elected by the people.

This shows how deeply democratic principles have taken root in the Armenian Church, and it is owing to this that ecclesiasticism has unalienably been bound up with the people. FOR THE PEOPLE AND WITH THE PEOPLE IN EVERYTHING, this has been the motto of Armenian ecclesiasticism for centuries, and it is due to the psychology which expressed itself gloriously in the present war, when about one million Christian Armenians were voluntarily martyred, including about one thousand

two hundred bishops and priests, who obeyed the command of the Holy Scripture, which says: "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."

CHAPTER IV

DOCTRINE, SACRAMENTS, AND LITURGY

WE have seen that the Armenian Church, in adapting its administrative organisation to the needs of successive periods has been in a state of continual progress and development. It has been otherwise with regard to its dogmatic teaching and its ritual. In this respect the Armenian Church stands in the same position to-day as it occupied 1,600 years ago, i.e. during its primary period. It is a peculiar characteristic of the Armenian Church that, ultra-conservative as it is, dogmatically, it is nevertheless tolerant in the highest degree, thus reminding us of the English Constitution, which, though based on monarchical principles, gives greater political liberty than the constitutions of many republics, thus exciting the surprise and admiration of Continental jurists.

In order to understand the conservatism of the Armenian Church in dogmatic matters and its tolerance, we must acquaint ourselves with its conception of dogma and doctrine, which is so clearly presented by the Armenian Archbishop

Ormanian in his work entitled *The Church of Armenia* (98–104).

"The dogma is a proposition drawn from the sacred books and expressed in the formula which is both clear and distinct. It should be accepted by the followers of a given Church, on pain of estrangement from the bosom of that Church. The doctrine is a statement or explanation, equally drawn from the sacred books and corroborated by tradition. Consequently, it may be accepted as an assertion which is sound and positive, or it may be quasi-positive; but it imposes no obligation on the faithful to comply with it absolutely. In any case, they cannot be shut out of the Church unless they deny her. The dogma is the teaching of the Church; the doctrine is but the statement of the school. Dogmas belong to religion; doctrines to theology.

"The ancient Churches referred to the authority of Œcumenic Councils all beliefs which were in question, in order that any difficulty raised in connection with the dogma might be solved. That rule has never ceased to be rigorously observed from the early centuries until our present time.

"The Roman Church alone deemed it necessary, in the second half of the nineteenth century, to take away that prerogative from the Councils and to fix it on the person of the pope. But, in order to justify such a usurpation of authority, she could not do less than refer to that selfsame

authority which she had despoiled, thus compelling it to commit a moral suicide. But we need not dwell on this.

"It is said that the authority of the Œcumenic Councils for the formulation of dogmas was the outcome, in the first place, of the promise of divine assistance; that is to say, it is based on the spiritual aid which was promised to the Church. On the other hand, it is equally the resultant of the logical efficacy derived from the main body, and the immediate nearness of traditions. Therefore, it is not so much the number of individuals in the Œcumenic Councils, who are accepted as authorities, as the number of the Churches which are there represented. It follows, therefore, that the members of a Council which only concerns a single Church, though they may number a thousand, can only reflect the tradition of that particular Church; whereas, if they represent different Churches, they become the mouthpiece of the dominant opinion of the Universal Church. Likewise, if there is proximity of time between the origin of the traditions and its attestation, we are impressed by the force of the testimony. Can we reasonably attach any importance to a testimony which is connected with events or remarks which are about nineteen centuries old?

"We have said that the Œcumenic Councils were the official source from which emanated the dogmas of the ancient Churches. The Latin

Catholic, otherwise the Roman, Church is the one which has known best how to turn that tradition to account. She accepts as valid twenty Œcumenical Councils, beginning with the one of Nicæa in the fourth, and ending with the Vatican Council in the nineteenth century. The Byzantine, otherwise the Greek Orthodox, Church ceased sooner to lay down dogmatic decisions. She accepts as valid only seven Councils, the second of Nicæa, which was held in the eighth century, being the final of the series. The Armenian Church is even more radical in this respect. She acknowledges as lawful only the first three, which were equally recognised by both the Latins and the Greeks. She denies the Œcumenic character of the remaining four, against the views of the Greeks and the Latins, and of the thirteen which are accepted by the Latins alone. The Councils of the Armenians are those of Nicæa and of Constantinople, held in the fourth, and that of Ephesus, in the fifth century.

"It is necessary to recognise that every dogma with its mysteries constitutes a difficulty for the human understanding. And, seeing that the Christian religion, which we profess, imposes on it such a strain, to which it is our duty to submit, it is but wise that we should never overtax the difficulty. It is never wise, we assert, to increase needlessly the burdens of mysteries, nor the number of dogmas, nor that of Councils. No one will dis-

The Vardapet, Dr. Abel Abrahamian, fully vested (note the staff like a Greek bishop's, signifying that he is exercising episcopal jurisdiction.)

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pute what we say on this point, especially at this critical hour of stress that the faith is going through.

"If we wished to express, in the shape of a mathematical formula, the difference there is in the number of dogmas adopted by the Armenian, Greek, and Latin Churches respectively, we should be able to make good the following proportion: Arm., Grc., Lat. 3, 7, 20. Obviously, this is all to the credit of the Armenian Church. We think that it would be appreciated as it deserves if it were sufficiently understood by those who apply themselves to ecclesiastical questions. For instance, we have taken the opportunity of referring the point to a European diplomatist. Having asked him his opinion on the point, he made no difficulty in acknowledging that the advantage lay in having the least possible number of dogmas. We think that this testimony in favour of the Armenian Church will be confirmed by all men of sense.

"If, by a happy chance, the chief ancient Churches ever succeed, we do not say by amalgamating into complete unity, but at all events by establishing among themselves a mutual understanding, they would, most certainly, be able to find the best foundation for an agreement only on the basis of that Church. A closer connection is only possible when it rests on a position which is free from controversy; a minimum of conditions is of assistance in eliminating discords.

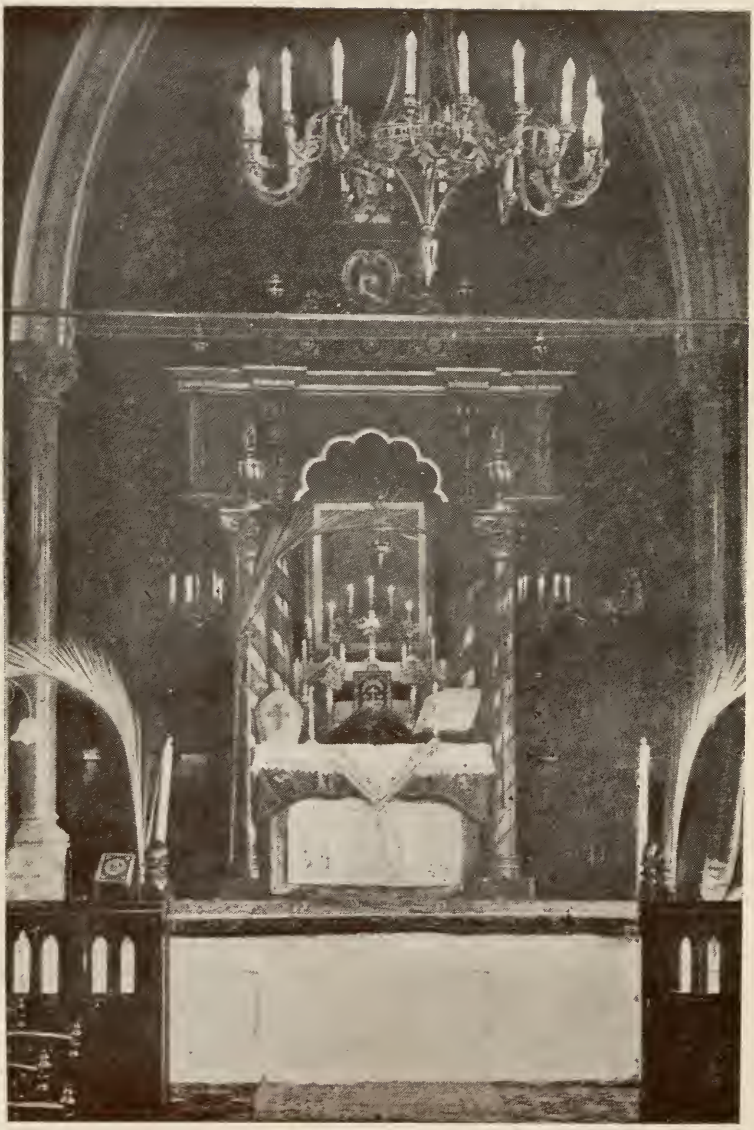
"The small number of dogmas which is peculiar to the Armenian Church must not be ascribed to mere chance, or to a result which has not been weighed. It is the outcome, above all things, of a sober principle in matters of doctrinal regulation. We have laid down the principle that the chief basis of the authority of Œcumenic Councils lay in unanimity of the various Churches; for by that alone are expressed effectively and truly the views of the Universal Church. That unanimity has been practically realised in the three Councils summoned from 325 to 431, that is to say, in the course of the century which kept pace with the Church's triumph. During that period all the great Churches were of one mind as to the way in which dogmas should be understood. Where opinions differed—and there were many such cases, as with the Arians—these were only the opinions of individuals, and were never brought forward as the general opinion of a given Church. It will be noticed, too, that during this early period there were no disputes among the Churches, either regarding precedence or authority. The situation changed, however, totally after the third Council, when the antagonism of the patriarchal Sees began to prepare a fertile field for dogmatic questions. Each patriarchate, in turn, summoned a general Council in opposition to another. Such was the case when the question relating to the nature of Christ was raised. The opinion, based on the

tradition of the entire Alexandrine Church, was set aside by the Roman and Byzantine patriarchates combined, and they had the support of the Emperor Marcian. During the period of half a century there were unfolded declarations of a most contradictory type on the authority of the Council of Chalcedon, the fourth Œcumenic Council of the Greeks and the Latins. It is not, therefore, without reason that the Armenian Church has thought it her duty to look upon the Council of Ephesus of 431 as the last whereby the unanimity of the Churches was maintained, in the conviction that we have in it the true traditional groundwork of the Universal Church.

"One other reason for rejecting the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon was the very object it had of laying down dogmatic definitions. That object should have restricted itself to affirmation, and not the explanation of a given truth. The three earlier Councils complied with this rule by proclaiming the divinity of Jesus Christ, the divinity of the Holy Ghost, and the union of the divine and human natures in Christ. The essential truths, on which were based the dogmatic constitution of the Christian mysteries, that is to say, the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Redemption, has been perfected by the definitions of the three Councils. Breaking with this rule, we see the Council of Chalcedon entering on a path of explanations, and endeavouring to determine the circum-

stances either of the form or mode, and not the essence, of the incarnation, or of the union of the divinity and the humanity in Christ. But it is impossible that the explanation of a dogmatic fact should become the object of a definition or the substance of a dogma. Explanations can only assist us by providing material for study. The duty, therefore, of explaining dogmas devolves, not on Œcumenic Councils, but on schools and doctors of divinity. The authority of the Universal Church cannot be called upon to perform the part of a scholastic faculty."

In this way the Armenian Church, having formed its own conception of dogma and doctrine, finds that the unity of the Churches is not in their absolute similarity but in their "unitas in necessariis," and since all the essential dogmatic principles were formulated and accepted in the first three Œcumenical Councils, therefore the Armenian Church does not limit eternal salvation to its own members, but extends it to the members of all those Christian Churches that have accepted the dogmatic principles laid down by the first three Œcumenical Councils. This view was shared by the Universal Church before the Council of Chalcedon, when there were none of the present divisions and dissensions among the Christian Churches. Every Church that accepted the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Atonement, while keeping its own views on other doctrines,



An Armenian Altar set for the Liturgy.

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was regarded as leading its members in the way of eternal salvation. From all this the reason becomes clear why the Armenian Church is, as compared with other Churches, on the one hand tolerant, and on the other has, up to the present time, held without alteration the Athanasian formula (the Nicene Creed) drawn up and accepted at the Council of Nicæa. This being so, it is strange that there are people who call the Armenian Church heretical without considering that, if the Armenian Church is judged heretical, then the same judgment must be pronounced on the Universal Church—which would be absurd.

After the dogmatical principles comes the doctrine of the Sacraments. Like the Roman and Greek Churches, the Armenian Church accepts seven Sacraments, viz., Baptism, Confirmation, Communion, Confession, Ordination, Marriage, and Extreme Unction.

The sacrament of *Baptism* is administered by one of the clergy, who dips the child three times in the font filled with blessed water, mixed with drops of holy *myron* (chrism), repeating the formula: "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," and adding the child's name. Immediately after the performance of this ceremony, the priest proceeds to the rite of *Confirmation*, anointing with holy chrism the child's forehead, eyes, mouth, nose, heart, hands, back and feet; after which he administers *Communion* to the newly-confirmed

infant. Thus three of the sacraments are administered on the same occasion.

As to *Confession*, the Armenian Church is less strict than the Catholic. The Father Confessor makes the penitent repeat after him the accepted formula in which the chief sins are enumerated. If the penitent feels the need of confessing particular sins, he does so; if not, without minute questioning, the priest pronounces the formula of absolution and admits the penitent to Communion.

The *Communion* is usually administered after the celebration of Mass in the Church, though in cases of necessity, it can be administered in any place and at any time.

Extreme Unction is administered only to the clergy, i.e. priests, bishops, and Catholicos.

Ordination is administered by imposition of hands and anointing. Priests are ordained by bishops; bishops by a Catholicos, and the Catholicos must be ordained by twelve bishops, all of whom must take part in the imposition of hands.

The sacrament of *Marriage* is administered by a clergyman by licence from the bishop of the diocese. Although by the laws of the Church divorce is permissible, it is attended by great difficulties.

The administration of some of these sacraments is very impressive and picturesque, e.g. the ordination of the Catholicos, which takes place in the Cathedral of Etchmiadzin. On such occasions the

ceremony is attended by representatives of the Armenians in every part of the world, so that it may be safely said that the ordination of a Catholicos is a Pan-Armenian Festival.

One criticism may be passed on the ceremonies of the Armenian Church, viz., that they are too long. This fault characterises the ritual of all oriental people, who delight in long and ornate religious rites, which do not appeal to the moderns in the West. One of the reforms of the Armenian Church will be the abbreviation of Church Services.

The Liturgy of the Armenian Church is also long and impressive. It is only necessary to glance at the interior of an Armenian Church to form an idea of the solemnity of the Services performed there. Familiarity with the architecture will convince any one that the Armenian Nation has devoted all its architectural genius to the structure of churches and monasteries. We do not wish to dwell at any length on Armenian architecture; we only direct our reader's attention to the plan facing p. 17, which will give an idea of the interior structure of an Armenian Church. As characteristics of Armenian ecclesiastical architecture, I should like to emphasise a few points which indicate, on the one hand, the piety of the Armenian people, and, on the other hand, the oppressed condition of its political life.

Armenian monasteries are generally built on high ground: in the first place, to remove them

from the disturbance of traffic. A Western traveller will remark that the sites selected for monasteries are the most beautiful spots in the country, where one instinctively bows down to the greatness of God and Nature. Generally the entrance to monasteries and churches is low and the windows are high and narrow. These things are not accidental but significant, for the churches serve, not only as praying-places, but also as a refuge for fugitives during attacks from their enemies. The piety of the Armenian people is revealed in the fact that, although there are no pews in the churches and the worshippers have to stand the whole time, the latter do not take their departure till the close of the Service. At certain points in the Service they kneel. The essential part of the Liturgy is the Sunday Service.

Besides the Sunday Services, Mattins and Evensong are recited daily (Prayers, Psalms andLessons). Intermittently there are chants and hymns (*sharakan*—string of gems) which form the musical part of the Armenian Service; for the organ is not generally used in Armenian Churches, although there is no prohibition of its use, and there are some places where the Sunday Services include organ music. One of the weak points of the Armenian Service is the sermon. It does not form a regular part of the service as in Protestant Churches. In that respect, Luther went so far as to make the sermon the central point of the Service, saying,

" Pascere non aliud est quam docere " (" To pasture is nothing but to teach "). In Armenian Churches sermons, as a rule, are preached only on special occasions. One reason for this is, probably, the length of the Service, so that the reformer of the Armenian Church, by shortening the Service, might pave the way for the more frequent introduction of sermons.

It must be admitted that the strict observance of Armenian rites requires special and careful training, which can only be attained after several years' experience. This reminds one of the mentality of the old Hebrew scribes and the mediæval European jurists, according to whom the Law Books were perfect in proportion to the complicated character of the language, which rendered it incomprehensible to the common people. It is not surprising that there should be traces of this mentality in the Armenian rites when we consider that in 1900, on the threshold of the twentieth century, the German " Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch " is so worded that it is comprehensible to no German who is not a lawyer. On the other hand may be noted to the credit of little Switzerland that its " Code Civil," published twelve years after the German Law Book, is written in such clear language that it can be understood by the simplest peasant. It is only to be hoped that the reformers of the Armenian Liturgy will be guided by the example of Switzerland, and thereby gain the approbation of every educated man.

CHAPTER V

THE PROBLEM OF REFORMATION IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

THE unjust political conditions under which the Armenian Nation has lived for centuries have not only attracted the attention of European diplomatic circles, but have also aroused the sympathy of the ecclesiastic world, which has made strenuous efforts to succour the stricken portion of the Armenian people. Regarding these efforts as the aid of fellow-Christians, the Armenians will never cease to feel grateful to all their Western sympathisers and friends. But may we be permitted to say that the pro-Armenian activities of these two circles have not yet produced any striking and permanent political results, and sometimes have even been prejudicial to the interests of the Armenian Nation ? We are not saying this as an accusation against our friends but only with a view to pointing out their mistakes, which have arisen, for the most part, because they have not been fully acquainted with the past history of the Armenian Nation, and are ignorant of the standard of civilisation reached by the people ruling over them—

if, indeed, the latter may be said to have attained any civilisation at all. Thus our Western friends, being ignorant respecting Eastern peoples and their ways, though deeply anxious to benefit Armenia, have failed to see the root of the evil. To prove this, one example will suffice : Professor F. Tournebize, of Beyrut University, in the preface to his work, " Histoire Politique et religieuse de l'Arménie " (Paris, 1900), maintains that, if the Armenians would embrace Catholicism, they would render themselves immune from Turkish oppression and persecutions. How naïve this opinion is, is proved by the fact that during the World War, the Turks *massacred alike* the Armenians of all denominations, as well as other Christians, without discrimination.

Many of our Protestant friends, thinking that the Armenian Church does not indoctrinate the people with true Christianity, have deemed it necessary to start, in the bosom of the Armenian Church, a sort of reform movement on an Evangelical basis and have established in Armenia a number of Evangelical religious communities.

Let us leave aside the past history of the Armenian Church, which is a continuous record of martyrdom, and confine ourselves to the war just over, during which the part played by Armenia towards the rest of Christendom should enable every one to perceive what sort of Christians are produced by the Armenian Church. Were not

those hundreds of thousands of martyrs the true children of the Armenian Church, who never for a moment thought of saving their lives by embracing Islam? Were not those 1,200 bishops and priests clergy of the Armenian Church who, after undergoing unspeakable tortures, were put to death together with their flocks, with the living words of Scripture on their lips, and the cross clasped tightly in their hands? What stronger proof could we have than self-devotion such as this of the firm faith in and the inseverable attachment to, Christianity of the Armenian people? Another unsuccessful attempt on the part of our Protestant friends: coming to Armenia and seeing that the Holy Bible is being read in Ancient Armenian (*Grabar*), whereas the colloquial language of the people is Modern Armenian (*Ashkharhabar*) they, without investigating the matter, probably following the example of Luther, considered it advisable to get the Scriptures translated into Modern Armenian and to circulate this version among the people. We feel sure that our Protestant friends would not have done this if they had known what reasons have withheld the Armenian Church from doing this work itself. The Armenian Church has not made a modern version of the Bible, for two reasons:

(1) Because the Armenian Church, being a National Establishment, must maintain uniformity in the rites and ceremonies, and uniformity can only be

preserved by retaining the Old Armenian Version, because the literary language of the Turkish Armenians differs from that of the Russian Armenians, owing to the long separation of these two sections of the Armenian People, so that, if the Bible were translated into the language of one section, it would be useless to the other section.

(2) The modern language is less developed than the ancient, which ranks with classical Greek and Latin. The excellence of the ancient Armenian language is shown by the fact, which was mentioned above, that the Armenian version is called by Western linguists and theologians "The Queen of translations." It may be pointed out that the version of the Scriptures in the ancient language is familiar to the common people, even to the illiterate, in both Turkish and Russian Armenia, so that congregations fully understand what is read to them.

For these reasons, the Armenian Church, while realising the need of a fresh translation of the Bible, has postponed this work until these two sections of the Armenians are amalgamated in one political and intellectual life, which would engender a fusion of language, thus making the new translation useful to all Armenians, without injury to the unity of the Church. Our friends, being ignorant of the circumstances we have mentioned, have translated the Bible into the so-called "modern" language, which is anything but Armenian.

We may direct the attention of the reader to one more point, viz., the Armenian conceptions of religion and nationalism. These two ideas are identical in the minds of Armenians, and the boundaries of religion are also national boundaries. Thus the Armenians who have become Catholics or Protestants, especially the uneducated ones, generally consider themselves to be severed from the Armenian Nation. We do not wish to imply that there are no Armenian Catholics or Protestants who are as good patriots as any in the Armenian Church.

All that we have said proves that the root of the evil must be sought elsewhere, that the reform of the Armenian Church must be based on different principles from those advocated by our Catholic and Protestant friends. That the Armenian Church is in need of reform is obvious ; that some of its rites and ceremonies, which have been kept unchanged for centuries, do not respond to modern requirements, every one knows ; that the standard of education for the Armenian clergy should be raised, is the desire of every Armenian, and that all Armenian prelates have realised the deficiencies of their Church is evident from the fact that, whenever favourable conditions have been secured, the Armenian Catholicos has initiated reform. Within our own memory, such an opportunity has occurred. Immediately after the Russian Revolution, before the advent of Bolshevism, the

present Catholicos, George V, summoned a congress in Etchmiadzin to consider the project of the revision of the Constitution of the Armenian Church. This proves two things, viz.: (1) That, in order to bring about a radical reform of the Armenian Church, it is necessary that Armenia should have a normal political life—in other words that she should be independent. (2) That reform should begin from within not without. If our friends wish to accomplish true Christian work, they must take this point of view, and work in this direction.

We are convinced, and our conviction is shared by many, that, until the Armenian Nation has become the master of its own political destiny, the Armenian Church must remain the only Pan-Armenian National Organisation and be called upon to add to its basic ecclesiastical and pastoral labours a number of problems of a purely political character. This necessity is an obstacle in the way of radical Church reform.

The Armenian Church has among its clergy a number of members who, having been educated in Europe, have made a first-hand study of European Christianity, past and present. These, being well acquainted with the psychology of the Armenian Nation and its surrounding conditions, are well qualified to solve the problem of the reformation of the Armenian Church. When they have achieved their ends, in a free Armenia, our Western

friends will see that the reformed Armenian Church will be in a state to render signal service, not only within the boundaries of the Armenian Nation, but among a number of surrounding non-Christian peoples whom the Western missionaries do not approach.

By the liberation of Armenia, the Armenian Church will be placed in a condition to cultivate such friendships and form such connections as are necessary for all Eastern Churches. Thus Christianity, gaining strength in the East, will be able to form a buffer against Mohammedanism, on the one side, and on the other side to stretch out a hand to its Anglican sister-Church, which, more than any other Church, is sympathetically inclined towards the Churches of the East.

CHAPTER VI

THE RÔLE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH IN THE NEAR EAST

IN the preceding chapter we enunciated those basic principles which should guide the reformation of the Armenian Church. In this chapter we shall endeavour to describe the rôle of the Armenian Church, when reformed on these lines, in the Near East.

Let us be allowed here to cast a glance on the past of the Armenian Church.

Armenian history tells us that St. Mesrop, after forming an alphabet for the Armenians, went to Armenia's northern neighbour, Georgia, and began to preach Christianity there. St. Mesrop not only preached to the Georgians, but also invented an alphabet for them and established a number of schools. It is a well-known fact that the Georgian Church, which originated in this way, remained connected with the Armenian Church till the sixth century (506), so closely that the Georgian Bishops were not appointed without the consent of the Armenian Catholicos.

In the same way, the Armenian Church has

spread Christianity among its north-eastern neighbours in Albania, which fell so much under the influence of Armenia that the Albanians became entirely amalgamated with the Armenians. Traces of them may still be found in the Armenian district of Utik. The part played by the Armenian Church in converting this people is an indication of what this Church might have achieved if Armenia had not been subjugated to a foreign yoke and the Armenian Nation had had a bearable political life. The foreign—especially the Mohammedan—yoke has been so oppressive to the Armenian Nation that the latter has with difficulty succeeded in preserving its own existence. If any other nation had been condemned to bear all the persecutions and tortures to which the Armenians have been subjected for centuries it would by this time have both lost its nationality and changed its religion. To the honour of the Armenian Nation and the glory of Christianity, both the Armenian Nation and the Armenian Church are still standing erect to-day : not only are they erect, but they are strong enough to continue performing the rôle allotted to them by keeping alight in the Near East the torch of Christianity and of Western civilisation.

We have said that the Armenians are European in origin and culture, the sole difference between them and other Europeans being that they have left their home in Europe and settled in the Near

East. This separation by distance has not prevented them from keeping in touch with European civilisation.

Since the fifth century Armenian students have sought and found Western centres of learning; it was the same in the Middle Ages, and it is the same now. There is no European university of any note that has not Armenians among its students. If we add to this the fact that Armenians who have acquired European culture return and take up their abode in the East, it becomes obvious that the Armenian Church has more facilities than any other for spreading Christianity and Western culture among certain non-Christian peoples in the East; in other words, it is the vocation of the Armenian Church to fulfil the main part of the missionary task on which so much energy and money are expended by western Christian Churches, often without great results. It is not surprising that missionary history has recorded facts confirming what has just been said; when Russia in 1828, after the Russo-Persian War, conquered, among other countries, some of the Armenian districts in the Southern Caucasus ("Karabagh and Shamakhi"), a party of missionaries from Basle applied to the Russian Government for permission to proceed to those provinces and convert the Mohammedans. Having secured the desired sanction, the party set out, and, when they arrived in Shamakhi, in 1838, after some futile

attempts, they became convinced that it was impossible to have any success with Mohammedans, but, in order to have something to show to the Basle Committee, they began to preach among the Armenians, who were already Christians. The Russian Government hearing of the missionaries' change of programme, absolutely forbade them to continue their activities.

Space will not allow us to quote many other examples of this kind. Such incidents need not surprise us if we consider that the Western missionaries were quite ignorant of the native tongues of the country, and the manners and customs, as well as the mode of thought, of the inhabitants. It is natural that work started under such conditions should not produce the desired results. But the rôle of the Armenian Church is different. Having been for centuries the neighbour of non-Christian nationalities, it is well-versed in everything connected with them, and in fact knows them through and through. For this reason the Armenian Church is better qualified for the work than new-comers from without. One fact that should not be overlooked is that, in the East, when a non-Christian hears that some one has come from abroad for the sake of proselytising, he gets frightened, whereas he has no fear of the Armenian Church, with which he is familiar.

All this shows that the Armenian Church has many qualifications for the spreading of Christi-

The late Catholicos of Etchmiadsin (Kevork IV).

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anity among certain non-Christian peoples of the Near East, some of whom are already open to conviction. We refer to the Kurds, who, although Mohammedans, have lately begun to go on pilgrimage to Armenian holy places and to send their children to Armenian schools, because they have no writing and no literature of their own. Unfortunately, the obtuse Turkish Government has always discouraged friendly relations between the Mohammedan Kurds and the Christian Armenians. The situation will certainly be changed after the ratification of the final Peace.

Over and above rôles already enumerated the Armenian Church will be of important service in the solution of another question : the rapprochement of all the Christian Churches, to attain which the English Church has already started certain movements. As far as the problem concerns the Churches of the Near East, it must be borne in mind that the Armenian Church is in a position to play a remarkable part. The urgency of such rapprochement is felt by the Armenian and other Eastern Churches, not merely for the sake of establishing mutual and friendly intercourse among the Christian nations, but also for the sake of forming a united front to hold its own against the Mohammedanism which is menacing all equally. Had strong unity previously been established between the Christian Churches of the East and the West, Mohammedan Turkey would not have

treated its subject or neighbouring Christian nations as it did during this war. On the other hand Christian Europe would not have tolerated the indifference of her responsible statesmen towards the sufferings of the Eastern Christians.

Now for a few words on our conception of the problem about the reunion of Churches.

May we suggest that the pioneers who are desirous of a rapprochement of the different Churches might create for their mutual relations an organised judicial status. In this respect the Churches, however much they may differ from the State Organisation, may take example from the latter.

As there exists an International Law for the mutual relations of the States, and now the States have made another step forward by creating the League of Nations, in the same manner the Churches can establish a League of Churches to organise and legalise the inter-relations of the Churches. This is the best way of attaining practical power and establishing actual bonds among the Churches for Christian people. Some may argue that such an organised power may be alien to the purely Christian spirit, which should be the dominating principle of any Church organisation. But it should not be overlooked that the Church, though a purely ecclesiastical establishment, lives within the scope of human social life. It is not alien to the nature of Churches to have

certain legalised standards for their individual inner life, why should it be alien to their nature to accept certain rules for their mutual relations ? On the other hand, those who are anxious to keep the peculiarities and independence of the Churches need have no fear that by the institution of a League of Churches the latter will lose their independence or their national characteristics. If they recall the fact that by the existence of International Law and the League of Nations the sovereignties of the States do not suffer in any way, they must accept the fact that a League of Churches is also possible and essential.

CHAPTER VII

THE EXERTIONS OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH ON BEHALF OF THE LIBERATION OF ARMENIA

ANY one who is acquainted with the historical development of the Armenian Church knows that, ever since the time when Armenia fell under foreign domination, the amelioration of her political situation has been a special care of the Church. It may even be said that the deliverance of Armenia has to-day become a dogma in its Church. In order to understand better the importance of this peculiar "Dogma," and the efforts which the Armenian Church has made, during several centuries, for its realisation, let us recall the historical facts.

In the middle of the seventeenth century Armenia became a real field of battle between Turkey and Persia. The sufferings of the Armenians during these wars are indescribable. At last, in 1620, these two states ceased hostilities and concluded a treaty of peace, by which Turkey received the western, and Persia the eastern, part of Armenia.

During this period, the Armenians of the mountain provinces in the north-west part of Armenia (Karabagh), taking advantage of the state of war between Turkey and Persia, obtained a certain amount of autonomy, and the Persian Government found itself obliged to recognise their semi-independence.[1]

After this success, the idea of the complete independence of Armenia began to revive. The monastery of Etchmiadzin, the spiritual and administrative centre of the Armenian Church, became the home of this patriotic movement. The Catholicos, Hakop IV of Djoula (1655–1680) convoked a secret assembly consisting of six clerical members and the same number of lay members, with the object of drawing up a plan of action, to the end of achieving the entire deliverance of Armenia. It was very natural that the eyes of those who attended this meeting, held under the roof of an Armenian monastery, should turn towards Europe, with which they felt themselves connected through their Indo-European blood and their Christianity. In order to obtain the help of the Pope and the European sovereigns, the assembly decided to send a delegation to Europe, under the presidency of the Catholicos himself.

[1] These provinces, governed by Armenian princes (called *Melicks*) were five in number: (1) Gulistan, governed by Prince Melik-Beglarian. (2) Djraberd, by Prince Melik-Issraëlian. (3) Katchen, by Prince Hassan Djalalian. (4) Dizak, by Prince Melik-Avanlan, and (5) Varanda, by Prince Melik-Shahnazarian.

This delegation was dissolved when it had only proceeded half-way, in consequence of the death of the Catholicos. The youngest member, Israël Ori, son of Prince Melik-Israël, was not discouraged, but continued his journey. On arriving in France, he entered the French Army, and was taken prisoner in the war with England. On his liberation, he returned to France, where Louis XIV was then reigning, and travelled also in Italy and Germany. Wherever he went, he solicited help for the Armenian cause. The high dignitaries, with whom he was constantly in relation, advised him to apply to the Emperor of Russia, Peter the Great (1682–1725). After a long journey in the East and Russia, Ori obtained from Peter the Great the post of Russian Ambassador to Persia. With a numerous suite, he arrived, in 1709, at Ispahan, where he hoped to be better able to organise the projected rising. Shortly afterwards he became suspect in the eyes of the Persian Government, who tried to pick a quarrel with him so as to get rid of him. For this reason Ori was obliged to leave Persia and return to Russia. He died at Astrakhan in 1711 and was buried in the court of the Armenian Church.

With the death of Israël Ori the delegation of the Catholicos Hakop IV came to an end, but the idea of the liberation of Armenia remained alive in the minds of his successors and of the Meliks of Karabagh. The latter continued to

appeal to the Christian sentiments of Peter the Great, following the advice given to Ori by the sovereigns of Europe.

In 1722 the Armenians learnt with unspeakable joy that Peter the Great had given orders to his army to march towards Armenia. The Armenian Archbishop in Russia, Minas Tigranian, was already in the Russian Army. For the purpose of assisting this army, the Catholicos Essaï of Gandzassar immediately collected a company of 10,000 Armenian volunteers. But—to their terrible disappointment—the Armenians suddenly saw Russia contenting herself with a few conquests in the Northern Caucasus, and leaving the Armenian provinces under the Mussulman yoke, making peace with Persia in 1723 and with Turkey in 1724.

The successors of Peter the Great continued to play the same game with the Armenian people, who, nevertheless, persisted in regarding them as the saviours of Armenia. In spite of this vexatious ingratitude, Russia has always been supported in her conquests in the East by the renowned heads of the Armenian Church, such as the Archbishops Hovsep, Erkaïnabazouk, Nerses of Ashtarak, as well as by the famous Armenian generals, Madatoff, Lazareff, Ter-Ghoukassoff, Alkhazoff, and others.

Probably the reader will be amazed that a nation like the Armenian, that has the reputation of being a clever and intelligent nation, has been so

easily and so frequently foiled in its efforts after liberation. But, in view of the fact that the Great Powers are endowed with all possible means of manipulating the fate of small nations to promote their own interests, we must not be surprised that the Armenian Nation on many occasions during the historical past has been used as a tool by one or other of the Great Powers for the furtherance of its political ends.

Unfortunately the case of Russia is not the only one in the political history of nations in which a great power has taken advantage of the suffering and good faith of a small, oppressed people in order to secure the success of its great plans of conquest.

In spite of everything, the Armenian Church and people have not ceased to protest against the injustice of which they have been the victims and to proclaim to the civilised world that the human conscience will not be satisfied so long as Armenia remains under the yoke of the Mussulmans.

For this purpose, the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, Mgr. N. Varjapetian, sent a national delegation under the presidency of Bishop Khrimian (one of the greatest personalities that the Armenian Church has known), at the time of the Congress of Berlin in 1878, to plead the cause of Armenia.

Article 61 of the treaty drawn up at this congress, by which it was thought to satisfy the claims of

Armenia, has remained a dead letter. Moreover, this article is nothing but Article 16 of the preliminary treaty of San Stephano, concluded between Russia and Turkey on March 3, 1878.[1]

In spite of all the acts of injustice of which the old diplomacy was guilty towards Armenia, the Armenian Church has continued its efforts up to this day. The present national delegation of Armenia, which, since the beginning of the World War, has taken up its residence in Paris and has rendered important services to the Allies, derives its origin from the Armenian Catholicos of Etchmiadzin.

[1] For the better instruction of our readers, I quote here Article 16 of the Treaty of San Stefano, which runs as follows :—

"As the evacuation by the Russian troops of the territory which they are occupying in Armenia, and which is to be restored to Turkey, might give rise to conflicts and complications prejudicial to the maintenance of good relations between the two countries, the sublime Porte undertakes to put in execution, without delay, the ameliorations and reforms necessitated by the local needs of the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security against the Kurds and Circassians."

Mgr. Varjapetian, seeing that this article has not at all improved the lot of the Armenians in Turkey, expresses himself thus in his memorandum addressed to the Congress of Berlin : "No equality before the law, no real liberty of conscience, no security of person or property."

This did not prevent the Congress of Berlin from repeating, almost word for word, the article in the Treaty of San Stefano, which has had no result.

It is not only by means of international politics and national and foreign military measures that the Armenian Church has striven to realise the independence of Armenia. It has exerted itself in another field of activity which, to our mind, it is more essential to note. We refer to the great part that the Armenian Church has played in the sustenance of the national spirit and of the ideal of a restored fatherland that it has held before the people. The Armenian Church has had two fields for these activities: the pulpit and the school. The Armenian Church, having the Armenian schools under its authority, besides inculcating Christian morality, has imbued the hearts of the scholars with the patriotic spirit. The same tendency has prevailed in the Armenian pulpit, where the Armenian clergy, side by side with the Christian faith and moral principles, have preached also love for their nation and fatherland. This condition has become so natural to the Armenian Nation that all its ecclesiastics of the higher order have been at the same time great patriots, so that an Armenian clergyman, however learned a theologian or however eloquent a preacher he may be, cannot command popularity if he is not at the same time a patriot. We may go still farther and state that a patriotic clergyman, though uneducated, is more esteemed in the Armenian Nation than one who is a man of great learning and capacity, but an indifferent patriot.

Thus the Armenian Church has worked for centuries for the liberation of Armenia, either by diplomatic means or military efforts. The cause which it has defended has been several times before European diplomats assembled at different peace conferences. Neither at the Congress of Berlin nor at any previous congresses has the Armenian question been settled in a just and satisfactory manner, because, in all these conferences, the liberty of nations has always been sacrificed to dynastic interests and ambitions.

It was the game of the aristocracy that then ruled the minds of diplomats. They listened to the champions of small nations without ever pronouncing in their favour.

But to-day this old school of diplomacy no longer exists, thanks to the principles of justice and right which serve as a basis to the present Congress. That Congress cannot realise these great principles without restoring Armenia to complete independence. This is the only solution that is consistent with the honour of the Allies and the right of the Armenian people.

The Christian world also owes it to itself to demand the independence of Christian Armenia. It will thus show that its propaganda, which costs a great deal of labour and several millions of money every year, is really carried on for the love of the Christ.

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